GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:121
ANSWERED ON:19.11.2001
BAN ON MINING AND USE OF ASBESTOS
SUBODH MOHITE

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government propose to ban mining, import and use of asbestos fibers and products in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the details of the large scale and small scale industries involved in producing asbestos sheets and pipes;

(d) the number of persons employed in these units;

(e) whether according to WHO there is no safe level of exposure of asbestos against cancer; and

(f) if so, the measures to be undertaken by the Government to safeguard the health of employees?

Answer

MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T. R. BAALU)

(a) & (b) No Sir. However, mining and manufacture of asbestos and asbestos-based products are regulated as per the provisions and procedures of EIA Notification, 1994. Crocidolite (Blue Asbestos) has been placed on the restricted list of imports by Ministry of Commerce, Directorate General of Foreign Trade in October, 1994. Further, import of waste asbestos (dust and fibre) has been prohibited by Gazette Notification dated 13.10.1998.

(c) & (d) The information is being collected.

(e) WHO had constituted a task force on Environmental Health Criteria (EHC) for chrysotile asbestos in July, 1996 and brought out its report namely; IPCS Environmental Health Criteria 203 in 1998. No threshold has been identified for carcinogenic risk.

(f) The Government has put in place various measures to safeguard the health of employees which, inter-alia, include mandatory environmental clearance for asbestos based industries (new and expansion / modernisation) irrespective of investment as per the provisions and procedures under EIA Notification 1994. Strict adherence to medical health care, occupational health monitoring and compliance to various BIS standards are prescribed while granting clearance. Further, Government has amended the Factories Act, 1948 in April, 2001 to make stringent the permissible exposure limit for chrysotile asbestos at 1.0 fibre / cc.